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## **Jailed for Taking Kids to Jury Duty**

By [LISA BELKIN](#)

Carmela Khury was called for jury duty in a Michigan murder trial, and she was having a complicated morning. Her mother, who had been watching Khury's 8-month-old son and 3-year-old daughter, needed emergency oral surgery, and then the backup baby sitter fell through after Khury's husband had already left for work.

So Khury called the office of Oakland County Circuit Court judge Leo Bowman at 8 a.m. and told a clerk she had no child care. He warned her that she would be arrested if she didn't appear by the time jury selection resumed at 9 a.m., so she took her children with her, arriving at 9:25. The judge excused her but ordered that she sit through every day of the trial (which is expected to last two weeks) as an observer, and then spend 24 hours in jail for contempt of court after the trial ended .

Eventually a higher authority intervened in the form of the State Court Administrative Office, which is an arm of the Michigan Supreme Court. An administrator there sent a letter to the judge saying he had no authority to act as he had, and threatening sanctions if he didn't stop. As L. L. Brasier, a writer for The Detroit Free Press, [explained](#) last week, Khury wasn't the only potential juror to have a run-in with Bowman among the pool assembled for the latest murder trial against Jerome Hamilton, accused of murdering a Rib Rack restaurant manager in Lathrup Village:

In addition to holding Khury for days, the judge also detained Ramesh Sapra, a businessman, who told Bowman jury service would cause his small company harm because it was facing an upcoming deadline.

In other cases, Bowman detained for days: a Wayne State University medical student because he said his midterm exams would interfere with his jury duty; a woman who said she could not serve on a sex case because she had once been sexually assaulted and a woman who said her husband's pending travel overseas would create a hardship for her family because she had no day care for her small children.

So it isn't only parents without child care whom Bowman does not trust, but they certainly seem to be high on his list of those he assumes are trying to duck their civic duty.

What should Khury have done? Should jurors with child-care conflicts get more leeway than jurors with workplace conflicts?